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way of building, and every stage of evolution from the village-barrack to separate family houses may be observed in Karen villages to-day. (See the illustrations on pages 94, 220, and 227.)

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When an epidemic breaks out in a bamboo village-house, the inhabitants are not held there by the considerations that ordinarily prevent the dwellers in durable towns and cities from taking their prompt departure. At best the Karen village-house is habitable only for a year or two, was built by the combined efforts of the men of the little community from material of which the supply is abundant, and can be replaced quickly. When, therefore, disease begins to spread among the adjacent families, they scatter to the four winds with their most necessary belongings. Soon they gather and build another village on a new site and, having removed the last of their possessions from the old infected structure, leave it to decay or set it on fire.

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When a village community is removing from one site to another, the women prepare food and liquor for the journey, pack up their belongings and leave them in the jungle near the path, if they do not wish to take them to the new place at once, and, finally, prepare the offerings to be left behind. These offerings consist of four balls of cooked rice, one white, another made black by being mixed with charcoal, and the other two colored red and yellow, respectively, by the admixture of colored pigments. These balls are placed on a large winnowing-sieve that has been woven by the women for the purpose at the very last. This tray and its offerings are carried to the central part of the house, where it is visited and spat upon by every member of the village. They then repeat the following lines:

[539]

> "Let all sickness and pain depart. Depart all colds.
> Go eat your black rice, your red rice.
> Go eat your betel and its leaves.
> Go eat with your wife and your children.
> Go stay in your house."

After thus addressing the spirits, the villagers take up their burdens, beat their drums and gongs, and set out for their new abode—a sight, indeed, for a motion picture camera.

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On arriving at the new house, they do not enter it at once, but wait until some one has plucked from adjacent trees seven twigs growing upright, and with these has swept out the rooms. As the sweeper goes through the house he repeats the following incantation:

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"Go away, all evil spirits.
Depart, all devils.
We and our children are going to stay here.
Do not remain near. Go. Go."

The members of each family then take up the various household tasks, including the building of the fireplace. If this is not completed the same night, they tie up their wrists to keep their "k'las" from wandering away and finish it the next morning. This is done among the Karen of Siam.

342 In the preceding pages of this chapter I have attempted to give a description of the Karen village-house. I do not say "home," for the Karen language has no word for home. The house is, however, something more than the eating and sleeping place of the village families: it is the center of their domestic life and worship and as such possesses a certain amount of sanctity. From what has been said above, it is clear that the village structure displays no attempts at artistic decoration, and is not made attractive by any of the touches that give so rich a meaning to the word "home" among Christians. The Karen bamboo house, located in a tropical climate as it is, affords a certain amount of physical comfort: the breezes blow through its airy walls, and one may lounge and gossip within during the heat of the day and not experience great oppression. At night, when the cool air begins to make itself felt, the open fire with its cheerful blaze attracts the story-teller, while out in the shadows the youthful lover strums his harp, and the children and the dogs play about in sufficient quietness not to disturb their elders.

231 262 Everywhere common dogs are kept by the Karen. These are the ordinary smooth-haired pariah hounds, which are familiar to the traveler in all parts of the peninsula. Besides these there are the hunting-dogs, mentioned in the chapter on Hunting and Fishing.[1] Only in recent days have the Karen shown any inclination to raise cats. In the early days they professed not to eat these felines; but I can testify that, whatever their former antipathies to the cat tribe may have been in this regard, they no longer hesitate to eat the wild varieties of cats that are to be caught in the jungle. They also find rats palatable.

Pigs and fowls are the most common domestic animals among the Karen. Dr. Mason speaks of the pigs as being of the "small Chinese variety."[2] They are the property of the women and know

[1] See p. 102.
[2] *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXXVII, Pt. II, 129.

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243 When a crop has been harvested, the village chief and elders [361] choose the ground to be cut over the following year. Each village 787 has its well-recognized farming areas, beyond which are the lands 423 of the neighboring village. Each member of the communtiy then picks out his particular plot for cultivating, takes home a lump of the earth, puts it under his pillow, and sleeps on it. If he has an auspicious dream, he consults the chicken bones for a confirmation of the good omen. Securing this confirmation, he regards his choice as fixed. Otherwise, he selects another plot and repeats the ceremonies. Once his selection is approved by the auspices, the spot is called a "du la," and he clears a little space on the land, after which he addresses the spirits as follows:

● [539]

"Depart all you evil spirits ('ta we ta na').
We are going to work here for our food,
To get sustenance for our wife and children.
Let no sickness come upon us.
We are going to work until it is finished."

Next he places a lump of soil on the clearing and, having wrapped the chicken bones in the leaf of a creeper ("ki ku"), he touches the lump with them, raises them towards the sky, and again touches or strikes the clod with the mystic bones. He now breaks these apart and scrapes them until he can insert splints of bamboo into the holes of the bones. If this act of divination is also successful, he is ready for work.

241 In the early days, when much of the primeval forest was still 243 standing, the Karen would clear out the brush and bamboos from among the giant trees on the hillside they were preparing to cultivate. Then they raised platforms at the foot of the trees from which they could cut them above the broad-spreading buttresses at their base, leaving enough of the trunk intact to keep them from falling. When the whole hillside tract had been cut over in this manner, they felled the uppermost tree so as to crash down on those just below, and these in turn would bring down others until

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officers, who should become familiar with the Karen people and language, should develop a plan in accordance with which these tribes might be given reservations of land in exchange for the valuable areas now under their control. These reservations might be either in the hills or on the plains, but the Karens should be taught to cultivate them according to approved methods, in order to gain an ample livelihood. Old racial animosities and the temptation for one people to exploit another militate against entrusting such a policy to Burmese officials. It ought to be placed only in the hands of earnest, straightforward Government officials, who have gained the confidence of the Karen and are able to deal with them sympathetically but firmly. This general program would doubtless involve some outlay in supplying cattle, not to speak of competent instruction in modern agricultural methods, animal husbandry, etc.

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243 the whole mountain side seemed to be swept by a mighty avalanche, which resounded far and wide across the valleys, drowning the shouts of the people who were wild with excitement at seeing the culmination of the labor of weeks. The fallen timber and heaps of brush had still to lie for a fortnight or more in the hot sun until dry enough to burn.

The burning-off process, which is always a necessary part of clearing the land as mentioned above, is preceded by its appropriate ritual, in order to prevent any wandering shades or "k'las" from being consumed. As a means of warding off evil, the ritualist ties up his wrists and, as he does so, invokes the "k'las" as follows:

[539]

"Pru-u-u k'la, come back. Remain not in the forest,
Nor in the places where the jungle is newly cut.
Do not stay with evil demons.
We are about to burn our cutting.
Come back and stay in the house. Come back."

In lighting the blaze, they do so with fire from bundles of twigs that have first been sprinkled with the blood of a fowl. The burning is carefully watched, so that the fire may be kept from spreading to the surrounding forests. When bamboos are burned, the air in the hollow joints expands and bursts the stems with sharp reports. A burning field sounds like the fusillade of a battery of machine guns and affords as much delight to the Karen as a packet of firecrackers to a small boy.

When the rains have begun, the villagers begin their planting. With a sharp stick or the point of a long knife ("dah") they make tiny holes in the soft ground about a foot apart and drop into each two or three seeds of paddy. The field is now called a "hku." About this time also each family builds the little hut in its plot of ground that is to serve both as a shelter and home until the harvest shall have been gathered. It is a rude affair made of a few bamboos, either saved when the field was cleared or newly brought from the jungle, and consists of a platform, roof, and loosely fitted sides.

When the paddy has sprouted and tinged the hillside with green, another ceremony ("theh a khü") must be performed. Offerings of liquor and a fowl, which has been cooked at home, are placed upon an altar with a platform and roof, built upon six posts. The platform consists of two parts, the upper, enclosed like a miniature hut and the lower, open like a porch. Sometimes a second altar is erected upon four posts and is called "ta th' mo." Close by the first altar a flaring basket ("ta theh") is set up, which is made

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of splints woven through the split end of a bamboo, the other end of which is planted in the ground, and a similar "ta theh" is placed in front of the altar. A cup containing some rice mixed with chaff, from which projects a little bambo branch, is put upon the altar. The little branch is a "hto bo" or pole. Water is now poured over the offerings, and the cup of liquor brought from the house is placed at the foot of the altar posts. Along the path leading to the altar sharp bamboo spikes are set, following a custom said to have been handed down from earlier times, to prevent wild elephants from disturbing the offerings. When all these preparations have been completed, the spikes and the altar are smeared with the blood of a fowl, and the spirits are again addressed:

"Let this cool you and please you, O Lord of the hills, O Lord of the land, Lord of fire, Lord of heat and cold. I am making you cool and comfortable. Therefore, moderate the heat of the soil and make the paddy good. Make the rice good. Do this until the field is full."

If there is a second altar, its posts are smeared with the blood of another fowl, while the suppliant prays:

"I am offering you that which is good, that which is comforting. Therefore make the rice and paddy good, and cause it to fill the whole field."

An offering of a live chicken, with its legs tied together, is laid in the basket near the larger altar, while the following words are uttered:

"I have prepared this for you. I am doing you good. I am making it comfortable for you. When the eagle flies, the crow is afraid. When the laughing-bird laughs and the barking-deer barks, let us not fear their bad omens."

The suppliant now burns the feathers off of the dead fowls; lays down five yam leaves; cuts bits of the tip of the bill from each, treating the nails and extremities of the wings in the same way; carefully distributes the different clippings from each fowl on each of the leaves, together with a morsel of rice and, finally, disposes one of the leaves upon each of the three offering-places mentioned above, besides one upon the roof of the hut and one upon a stump in the field. Then he dips a cup of liquor and, holding it aloft, pours out a libation, saying as he does so:

"Come partake of your liquor and your rice. Make the rice and paddy better. May we work and eat in comfort and pleasure. Let

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us not be overtaken by illness. May we work until the task is finished and eat to the end."

After examining the bones of the sacrificial fowls to learn their omens, the suppliant and his family cook and eat the chickens. He then weaves a basket with large meshes and on a leaf laid in the bottom places a black pepper and sprinkles some salt. He takes a small branch from an upright-growing plant and, moving about in the growing grain, strikes both the grain and the basket, which he is carrying, and recites this prayer:

"O Guardian Bird of the field, do not let anything eat the paddy in the plot where you watch. Do not let men come in or go out. Do not permit any one who may get in to redeem himself with money, but cause him to expiate his transgression by increasing the yield of grain."

Then, cutting off the head of another fowl, he smears its blood on the basket, which he sets down in the path near the edge of the field, and returns to his house.

In many places these rites are not now so carefully observed as the above account implies. Sometimes the larger altar is dispensed with altogether, and the offerings are placed upon the little altar and in the flaring baskets. Where the elaborate ceremonial is dying out, a single fowl may be used in place of several as an oblation sufficient to please the spirits and secure a plentiful harvest. In the illustration on page 74, from a photograph taken in the Pegu Yomas, are shown the various offerings, including the live chicken that has been left on a post to die. The flaring baskets with the other offerings are also shown. The bamboo reaching above the other things was set up to mark the height which, it was hoped, the paddy might attain.

Having sought the favor of the unseen powers that preside over the growing crop, the cultivator has soon to turn his attention to the numerous enemies that prey upon his field from the neighboring jungle. Elephants, wild pigs, and a number of small animals, including rats, eat the tender plants and later feed on the ripening grain. Birds and wild fowl of various kinds are also destructive from the time the grain is in the milk. Supplication to the Guardian Bird of the field does not relieve the rice-grower from the need of fencing his plot with reeds and bamboos, setting traps and snares, and erecting scarecrows and clappers to keep devouring creatures from his grain. Little hoeing is done, but the Karen and his whole family occupy themselves in watching the growing paddy, operating

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blood. They then consult the chicken's thigh-bones to see whether or not the auspices are favorable. If they are favorable, they say:

" 'We will grow old together;
We will visit each other's houses;
We will go up each other's steps.'

"The visitor then kills a hog or a fowl and performs the same rites on the other. On consulting the chicken bones, if the fowl's bones are unfavorable, he says:

" 'We will die separately;
We will go separately;
We will work separately;
We will not visit each other's houses;
We will not go up each other's steps;
We will not see each other but for a short time.' "

If the auspices are favorable, the two agree that they have entered into this relation of "do." They regard themselves pledged to each other as friends and bound to help each other in any manner necessary as long as they shall live. They call each other only by the name "do." In seasons of famine one aids the other to the extent of his ability. In case evil is spoken of one, the other defends him, saying: "That man is my 'do.' Do not speak evil of him. To do so is to speak evil of me. I do not wish to hear it."

Formerly it was the custom for many to multiply their "dos" in numerous villages, so that they might receive hospitality wherever they went and, in case of the planning of forays against some village, the "dos" might learn of it from their adopted brethren in other such communities. It is said that "dos" rarely quarreled, but remained faithful to each other. The institution seemed to exert a favorable influence on wild Karen society. Finally, Dr. Mason adds: "It may be compared to Masonry with its secrets."

The relationship named "tho" is formed by two men wishing to become brothers, by each drawing a little blood from his forearm, mingling it in the same cup, and drinking therefrom. Formerly the chicken bones were inspected in connection with this ceremonial, although nowadays they are not always used. This is a lifelong relationship and binds each to defend the other. From the time of the mutual adoption each calls the other "tho," and each speaks of the other by the same name.

The third relationship, "mwi," is one that may be mutually assumed by two young men, two young women, or a young man

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have swathed the heads of their foes. That is, their hosts by partaking of the talisman would become so confused as to fail to seize their weapons when needed for defense and would be overwhelmed by the enemy. Unlike the spies of Israel these Karen spies, on their return, usually gave a favorable report and displayed great eagerness for the combat.

The instigator of the foray now sent out for his men, who came not only from his own village, but also from neighboring ones where he had friends and blood-brothers. He might gather in as many as two hundred warriors. These he feasted, but before passing around the liquor he poured some on the ground as a kind of libation, while praying:

"Lord of the seven heavens and the seven earths. Lord of the rivers and streams, the mountains and hills. We give thee liquor to drink and rice to eat. Help us, we entreat thee. We will go forth now and attack yon village. We have swathed the heads of the inhabitants. Assist us. Render their minds oblivious and cause them to forget themselves, that they may sleep heavily and their slumber may be unbroken. Let not a dog bark at us, nor a hog grunt at us. Grant that the villagers may not seize a bow, sword, or spear. May the Lord help my children and grandchildren who go to attack yon village, and may he deliver them from all harm. May they subdue their enemies and not be lost. May they be delivered from the bow, the sword, and the spear."

After this prayer the elders drank in turn of the liquor, and it was then circulated freely among the assembled warriors. The instigator of the foray now killed a fowl, preparatory to inspecting its bones for a favorable omen as to the success of the undertaking, but before the inspection he offered up the following petition:

"Fowl, possessor of superhuman powers, fore-endowed with divine intelligence, thou scratchest with thy feet and peckest with thy bill. Thou goest to Hku Te (the king of death). Thou goest to The Na (monarch of death). Thou goest to Shi U, the brother of God. Thou goest into the presence of God. Thou seest unto the verge of heaven and unto the edge of the horizon. I now purpose to go and attack yon village. Shall we be hit? Shall we be obstructed? If we go, shall we suffer? Shall we die by the bow? Shall we be pierced by the spear? Shall we grow weary or exhaust ourselves? If so, reveal thyself unfavorably."[1]

[1] This prayer, in which superhuman powers are attributed to the fowl, is similar to prayers of the Kenyas of Borneo, who ascribe like powers to the pig.

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726 If the reading of the chicken bones proved unfavorable, an-
787 other fowl was slain, and a third, if necessary. On obtaining a favorable omen, the organizer of the raid harangued his men, telling them that they would surely prove victorious, that he would indemnify the families of any who might be killed, and that he would replace all weapons that might be lost or broken. He assured them that he expected all to return, and declared that no disaster could befall them. Thereupon he called for two volunteers to lead in ascending the ladder to the village-house and making the attack on the arrival of the war-band at its destination. Addressing the volunteer leaders, he promised them drums and buffaloes as rewards for the deeds of valor they were soon to perform. They were to be the hunting dogs, the wild boars, full of cunning and courage. If they should be slain, their families would receive the rewards. If, however, they failed, the disaster of the expedition would be their fault.

726 At length, the war-band set forth, chanting verses, as follows:
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"I go to war. I am sent.
I go to fight. I am sent.
Clothe me with an iron breastplate.
Give to me the iron shield.
I am not strong. May I take on strength.
I am weak. May I attain vigor."

"I go with a host of men.
We will reach the steps of the house
And fire muskets and shout aloud.
The men will come with wives and children.
Raise the spear and draw the sword.
Smite the neck and pierce the side.
The blood is gushing purple."

"The great hawk flies above the house.
It pounces on the chief's red cock.
It grasps its prey near the lowest step.
It seizes then the chief's white cock,
And the great hawk flies away,
Leaving the chief behind in tears."

726 Whatever one may think of the poetic quality of these three stanzas, they depict vividly the successive stages in their adventure, as the chanting braves conceived it. In the first stanza they

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repeated calls, "tauk-te, tauk-te, tauk-te," of the ubiquitous gecko" 837
or spotted lizard, which lives in hollow trees and sometimes in the 524
houses, they count off "richman, poorman, beggarman, thief," etc., in the playful attempt to discover to which of these groups their future husbands will belong, just as maidens in English-speaking countries count the petals of a daisy for the same purpose. They participate in running games, such as "tag," repeating rhymes in counting out the players and choosing the one who is to be "it." When the players are about to be counted out, they all squat on the ground near the one who is to say over the ditty, with their right fists extended in a circle. She strikes each fist as she utters a syllable, and the one whose hand is struck at the final word becomes the new leader or victim in the game.

There are many of these ditties in use by the children, some of 857
which are composed of words which originally may have had mean- 524
ings that are now lost, while some may be simply a string of reso- 538
nant syllables like our own "eeny, meeny, miny, mo." One of these rhymes, which was written down for me in the Pegu Hills, runs as follows:

"T' ku, hki ku, paw ta lu, saw maw ku ku li, lu t' re, maw ku ta [539]
aw yu."

Others, however, take the form of a narrative, for example, the following which speaks of a Burmese Buddhist monk ("pongyi"), an object of terror to the Karen children. Hence, they say:

"Hop kyi klo hko neu weh lo
Leh aw hsa leu ta lu hko.
Pla wa law teh, hseh ba a hko."

Translated, this reads:

"The 'pongyi' with close shaven head, miserably hungry,
Went to eat his food on the ridge.
The unpoisoned arrow falls and pierces his head."

The children have other little songs which they use in play as, for instance, when in the villages on the plains they run on the logs laid from house to house to serve as walks during the heavy rains. One of their verses is:

"Paw paw to me law ten to di do." [539]

Another version of this is:

"Paw paw pgha me law teh pgha di do."

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The translation of the former is:

"Walk, walk the bridge. If it falls the bigger it is," meaning the bigger the bridge, the greater the fall. The rendering of the latter is:

"Walk, walk, the bigger the man, the greater the fall."

When playing with the chickens, children sometimes catch one of them and pretend to rock it to sleep, droning the while:

"Hsaw hpo, mi, mi.
N' mo n' pa leh hsu Yo.
Heh ke so ne na p' theh tha wa ko lo.
Aw gha lo gha lo.
Me aw, hsaw hpo."

The translation of this runs,

"Sleep, sleep, little chick,
Your mother and father have gone to Shanland.
They will come back, bringing you a supply of white betel-nuts.
You can eat them one by one.
Sleep, little chick."

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Both boys and girls play with the seeds of the giant creeper ("maw keh"). These seeds, which are often two inches in diameter, look much like flattened horse-chestnuts or buckeyes. They come from the enormous pods, a yard or more in length, of the vine, *Estada pusoetha*, which grows a hundred yards or over along the tops of the forest trees.[6] The games in which these seeds are used are played in the dry season. An even number of players is required, divided into two equal groups or "sides." Each side must have the same number of seeds, which are made to stand on their edges by being set in grooves in the hard earth. The rows thus formed are from eight to ten feet apart, according to the age of the children playing. One player begins by spinning a "shooter" at the opposite row, aiming to knock down one or more of the nuts in it. Whether he succeeds or not, his opponent takes his turn, and the players thus shoot alternately back and forth, until one row or the other is entirely knocked over. The winning side is, of course, the one that first demolishes the other's row.

In another game played with these seeds the two sides are again equal in the number of players. However, only those on one side

[6] Burmese children also play with these seeds.

19: Marshall M-S (co., 1918) 1922 AFI Burma
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tween their hoped-for offspring, although such an agreement might be made at any time during the growth of the children. Such a pact was considered firmly binding on those concerned. The children might or might not be told of the arrangement. Later on, at any rate, the youth would learn of it; and it was expected, when the proper time came, that he would seek out his betrothed, even if she was then living in a distant village. Thra Than Bya tells of a couple who were thus affianced while living on the banks of the Irrawaddy River. During hard times the girl's parents removed from one place to another, until at length they settled near Moulmein. When the youth had reached man's estate, his father told him of his engagement and sent him to seek his betrothed. Knowing only her name and that of her father, he traced them from village to village until, arriving at the place where they then dwelt, the chief confirmed the fact and consented to the young man's entering into a rhyming contest with the maiden, when she should arrive at the feast that was being held there. Retiring into the jungle, the youth got himself up in disheveled array, returned, and addressed the damsel in poetic language, explaining briefly his mission. She repelled his attentions; but he persisted, saying that she belonged to him by right of their childhood betrothal. Thereupon she besought her parents to save her from such an undesirable husband. They imposed the condition that she should surpass him in the rhyming contest. Failing in the attempt, she humbled herself and invited him to her house, where her parents proceeded to celebrate her wedding with a great feast.[1]

Feasts, especially funeral-feasts, were the occasions at which youths and maidens met. They used to go to such gatherings in companies, each with its leader who was skilled in reciting or extemporizing simple verses. Being thus thrown together, couples often became engaged, pledging themselves in verses like the following:

Youth: "I promise you, you promise me.
We have promised each other."

Maiden: "After you have promised me and do not come,
Cotton will grow on your grave.
If you agree and do not come,
Paddy will grow over your tomb."

[1] In the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1896, Dr. Mason mentions similar customs as existing among the Karen of Tenasserim.

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Youth: "We are pledging each other before the dead.
We shall not be worthy of offspring."

If later during the same festival either one of the pair wished to break the betrothal, they addressed each other in verse, saying:

"We promise each other in rhyme.
Now let us speak verse again.
May evil not come upon us,
Or upon our descendants."

Such verses are called "hta thi kwaw." Unless an engagement thus made was broken off the same night, the young man was under obligation to send a mediator to arrange for the wedding within a short time. If he failed to keep his pledge, his strength to resist an evil charm ("so"), would lapse, and he would go, it was thought, into a decline.

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Many of these practices still obtain among the Karen in the outlying hill-country; and in choosing a bride no step would be taken without divination by the customary method of inspecting the chicken bones, except in the case of the betrothals effected by the young people themselves at the funeral-feasts. It sometimes happens that a young man, seeing a maiden who attracts him, mentions the circumstance to his parents, who approve his choice and send a mediator to her parents with an offer of marriage. As the services of a confidant are required sooner or later in nearly all cases, the omens are consulted and must prove favorable before he proceeds on his mission.[1] If on his way he should chance on anything that is inauspicious, such as the gliding of a snake across his path, the barking of a deer, or the report of a death, he will return home. Otherwise, he continues his journey to the house of the young woman's parents. The conversation that takes place there is carried on in verse characterized by figures of speech which suggest, but do not state explicitly, the purpose for which the mediator came. On entering the house, he sighs, perhaps, and remarks that he is in a trying position. The parents inquire what the matter is, and he answers with a couplet:

[539]

"Give me a white pullet,
And I shall feel better."

[1] See Chapter XXVII, pp. 220, ff.

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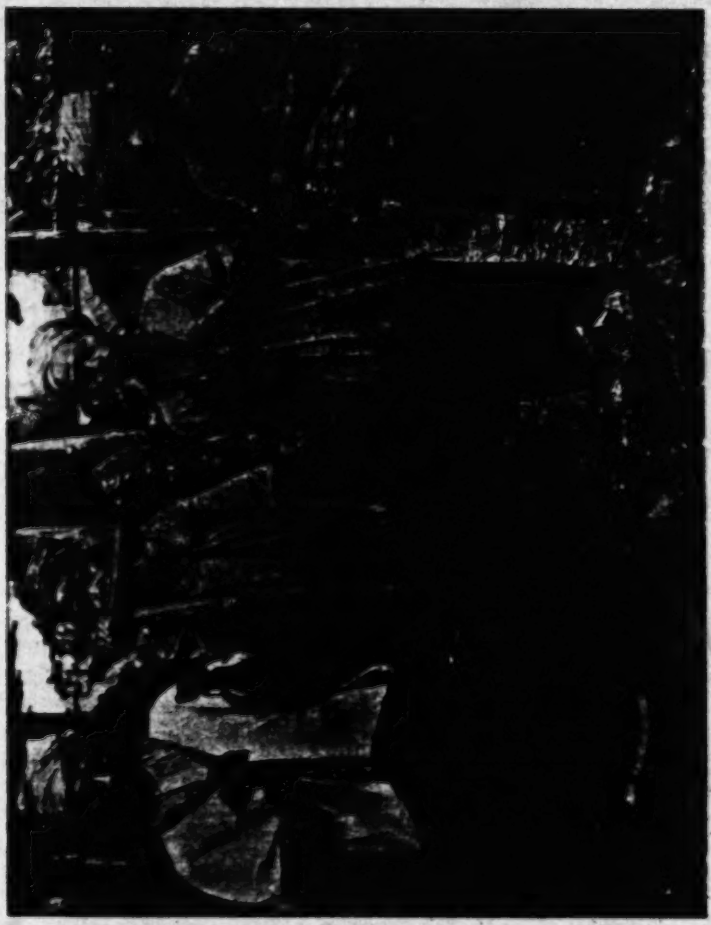
The parents apprehend that he is asking for their daughter. If not ready to give her in marriage, they may answer:

"This white pullet we have but raised;
Never once has she cackled."



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THE PARENTS OF THE BRIDEGROOM
Except for the youth with the wedding hat, they are using Burmese instruments on which they are practising preparatory to the wedding ceremony on the morrow.

The hint is sufficient, and the mediator promptly makes his adieu in plainer speech:

"You have not received me. Do not revile me.
The youth's parents will keep their son.

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You did not consent, but you spoke kindly.
As for me, I am not discouraged."

In case, however, the parents are favorably inclined, but are in doubt as to who the young man may be, knowing that their caller has a son of his own, they ask him:

"Do you come on your own legs,
Or on those of another?"

He replies:

"On the legs of another."

Or they may be uncertain as to whether he intends his offer of marriage for their maiden daughter or the older one, an eligible young widow. So they ask him:

"Are you crossing a flat bridge or a round one?"

The expression "flat bridge" refers to the young widow, the other to the maiden. A "round bridge" is a log, for in the jungle a bridge is commonly nothing more than a log. A flat bridge is one made of planks. The significance of the two expressions as applied by the parents is obscure to me, but is subject to several interpretations. If there should be two unmarried daughters in the family, both eligible, the parents would inquire:

"Have you come for a basket of rice
Or only for a mortarful?"

The basket, being the larger receptacle refers to the older and, presumably, larger maiden.[3]

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During his first call the mediator does not expect to progress far in his negotiations. If he has been favorably received, the family may kill a chicken and invite him to eat with them. He departs without knowing what the outcome will be, and the parents find an early opportunity to get the consent of their unmarried daughter to become a married woman ("mü pgha").

On his second visit a few days later the intermediary may find the father sitting at the front of the house and probably overhears him call out to the mother at one of her tasks within: "Here comes that male buffalo. Shall we tether him or let him go?" If she shouts back: "We might as well tether him," he knows that his proposal will be accepted. Even should she reply to the contrary, the caller would enter the house and pay his visit, but would make

[3] The Karens often use the word "large" in referring to an older child.

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585 343 through the east door and exit from the south side. The dragon was supposed at the time to be lying with its head to the west and its tail to the east.

585 539 With the near approach of the wedding-day the friends of the groom gather at his village, blowing horns, beating on gongs and drums, striking cymbals, and chanting "htas." Early on the wedding-morn every one is astir. The rice is cooked and eaten by sunrise and, to an accompaniment of all the noisy instruments and with shouting and singing, the party sets forth. In the olden days, when the precepts of the elders were strictly observed, there was much drinking of liquor and boisterous sport on such occasions, but withal a certain decorum was not altogether lacking by reason of the halting of the procession from stage to stage and the reciting of appropriate verses. As the party is ready to leave the village they sing:

"To-day is a good day.
We shall see a maiden as fair as cotton-wool.
This is indeed a good day.
We shall behold one as fair as a cotton boll."

On setting forth, they do not overlook the unmarried girls of the village:

"Here you have not loved me.
Listen to my wedding-horns blowing yonder.
Remain here. You have not esteemed me.
Watch us depart with our horns blowing."

On the journey they sing:

"The wedding is timed at the coming of the rats.
Unless death intrudes, we shall prosper.
The marriage takes place when the rodents are here.
Unless death comes, we shall work and be happy." [5]

As they approach the bride's village a party greets them:

"The 'the kaw' blossoms in the dark of the moon.
The moon waxes and wanes.
The 'the kaw' blossoms in the full of the moon.
The moon increases and declines." [6]

The above stanza refers to the maidens, still unmarried, who are waiting from one moon to the next. The groom replies:

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[5] The years of full crops always bring a plague of rats in the hills. Thus, the time of rats is a time of prosperity.

[6] This verse, recited by the villagers, refers to the girls who have not yet married and are still waiting from one moon to the next.

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"The mountains are great and lofty.
My desire brought me, panting.
Reeking with sweat on the towering hills,
My passion brought me, leaping and bounding.
I was wretched. I only trusted.
Whether good or bad the omens, come I would."

The whole company now enters the village, and its members are offered drink. (See page 185). Meanwhile, the young men shout:

"You have expected a company.
Can you feast such a company as we?
You invited a crowd.
Can you spread a feast for all of us?"

The hosts disclaim making any preparation for the company:

"There is nothing to eat.
Let us resort together to the betel-box.
As yet we have nothing else.
Let us partake from the bamboo betel-box."

But the guests will not be satisfied with betel chewing only:

"Boil for us. Brew our drink.
Feed us the white progeny of the pot.[1]
The hand raises food and drink,
And the heart is satisfied."

The women now insist that with little or no paddy they can do nothing:

"Have you not looked at the supply of paddy?
We women can prepare neither rice nor liquor.
Have you not seen the paddy?
We can neither cook rice nor brew liquor."

But the young men do not relax their demands:

"Bring out your distilling pipe.
That you have none, we do not believe.
Come prod us with your distilling tube.
That you lack one, we are not convinced."

At length, the women consent to supply what they have:

"We have nothing worth bringing to serve you,
But will fetch it, as ordered, though we suffer."

In some instances the intermediary acts as master of ceremonies for the young men, although they may choose another elder to serve as their leader. In Shwegyin, when the wedding party is about half-way to the village of the prospective bride, the elders

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[1] This refers to the white kernels of the cooked rice, which are often spoken of as the "children of the pot."

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inner room of the house. Thither the groom was escorted to his bride in the evening by his attendants, who chanted:

"Go, escort the husband to the maiden.
The mother looks on with smiles.
The wild buffalo shall enter.[9]
Tell the father to fasten the door.
Lead the young man to her room.
Let no one molest him.
Take in the youth.
Leave him undisturbed."

After the groom had seated himself near his bride, the rice and fowls were set before them. Each in turn took sparingly of the food, while the company looked on until the bride raised a morsel to her lips, when they shouted "Hpo nya mo! Hpo nya pa!" and began to scramble for the chickens, which they pulled to pieces and threw at the women. The latter returned the volley with shouts of "Hpo nya mo! Hyo nya ma!" This "teasing" of the future parents and throwing scraps of chicken at one another is said to have betokened the mutual expression of good wishes for increasing families for all those participating in the ceremony. The groom was then escorted back to the booth or the guest-room, where he spent the night with his friends.

Returning from our digressions in the preceding three paragraphs, the villagers early on the second morning of the wedding ceremonies prepare a feast of rice and chicken curry for their guests. Not less than two young roosters or two pullets are used in the preparation of this final feast, every part of the fowls being cooked, even the intestines, which have been carefully cleaned. Bits of stewed plantain stalks are included in the dish, inasmuch as the prolific nature of this plant is supposed to be communicated to those partaking of it, thus assuring the large families desired. A joint of bamboo full of liquor is also brought out. The bride and groom must then dip their fingers into the liquor and the food, while calling out "Pru-r-r k'la, heh ke" ("Pru-r-r k'la, come back"), two or three times. The elders now shout: "This day you twain, husband and wife, have become one spirit. May God take care of you. May the Just One watch over you. May the powerful Thi Hko Mü Xa (Lord of the demons) shield you. May you have strength to work and gain your livelihood. May you sleep in peace and eat the fruits of the land. May you have long life, ten children, and one hundred grandchildren." The elders next ad-

[9] A nickname for the intermediary.

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dress the "k'la," as follows: "Pru-r-r k'la, return, return. Do not stay in the jungle. Behold your place here. Do not leave it. Go not away. Look at your own room. See your own place." A morsel of the rice, together with the heart and lungs of the fowls, is then placed upon the heads of the bridal pair, and the guests proceed to eat the remainder of the feast, finishing it before sunrise.

Thus far the intermediary has passed through the marriage celebration with the consideration on all hands belonging to one who has conducted successfully the negotiations between the parents of the groom and those of the bride. He has been the groom's personal attendant, has carried his principal's few worldly goods to the bride's house for, as among the ancient Hebrews, the young man leaves his father and mother to become a member of his wife's family. But now the intermediary finds himself suddenly deprived of his position of respect and becomes the butt of the night's fun. The foot of a pig killed for the feast is tied about his neck with a rattan, and its head is set upon a post of the house for him to bark at for the sport of the guests.[10] If he could lift the head down from the post, it became his possession. His success in accomplishing this was said to symbolize his skill in finding a suitable wife for his friend, which was likened to the scent of the old Karen hunting dogs ("htwi maw seh") in the chase. The guests now take their departure for their several villages, having spent two days, if not more as sometimes happens, at the celebration. No one whose feet were sprinkled on his arrival, is allowed to leave until the celebration is over.

After the departure of the guests, the intermediary remarks to the bride's parents: "I have brought you a son. Cherish him. If you have aught to say against him, speak it out now." On receiving a negative reply he continues: "I have given him into your hands. I have done my duty, and my task is finished." One of the village elders tells the intermediary that after seven days he will be free from blame in case anything evil transpires concerning the groom. The bride's parents present him with a pair of fowls for his services, which he carries home and keeps, unless by reason of illness he must sacrifice them to recall his wandering "k'la."

The groom lingers about the village during the day after the guests have gone and in the evening is escorted by some of the elders to the bride's room. Formerly in some localities it was cus-

[10] In some places the pig's head was hung about the intermediary's neck, and he went about barking at one or another of the company, as the spirit moved.

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short time the relatives indulge in weeping, but soon begin to prepare the corpse for burial or cremation.

On the plains the body is bathed, but not in the hills. East of Moulmein on the Siamese border the face is brushed over with an infusion of acacia pods and tumeric for the purpose, as the people assert, of washing it and giving the soul a good start. They then repeat the following words: "You have gone on before. We have been left behind. May it also be well with us." As a receptable for the body the Bwe and some of the other hill-tribes about Toungoo used to hollow out a log coffin, as do the Chinese. But by far the greater number of the Karen wrap the body in a mat. While preparing this mat they offer a brief prayer:

"Let the shade of the dead depart.
Let the corpse of death and hades sleep on this mat.
Approach not. Come not near."

The two thumbs and the two great toes are tied together, but the string with which they are bound is immediately cut. After a blanket has been spread over the mat the body is placed on it and wrapped up in the two coverings, which are bound around at three places with red and white rope. These bands are connected by another rope running lengthwise of the body, which serves as the means of lifting and carrying the corpse. A bamboo water-joint and a betel-box [2] are placed upon the body, and the following words are spoken: "Chew your betel. Smoke your cigar. May your body eat, and may your 'k'la' eat as well." In Shwegyin those in attendance about the corpse address it, saying: "Do not take the path leading into the forest. Return to your resting-place and your pleasant home." Then they put the body in the guest-room and, having cooked rice and a duck curry, they place a portion of this food by it and say: "If your spirit and your 'k'la' have not departed, may they come and eat." Meantime, the beak, wings, and legs of the duck are dried a little by the fire and laid by the corpse, the following words expressing their purpose in so doing:

"Let the beak become a canoe for him.
Let the wings become his sail,
And the legs, his paddles."

Placing two bits of liver on the eyes of the corpse, they utter the wish: "May these become bright eyes for you, to see clearly your way as you go back."

[2] For an account of betel chewing see pp. 72, 73.

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"The sun is dark; dark is the sun.
The moon is dark; dark is the moon.
The face of the sun is black. We point to the plantain.
The tops of your trees are the roots.
The mouths of your rivers have become their sources."

"The face of the sun shines.
The sun rises and reveals himself.
The moon ascends and displays herself.
They sink into the great river,
Setting among the fragrant flowers,
Where the perfumes are most satisfying."

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No regular order of funeral ceremonies appears to be observed throughout the Karen country. Not only do different tribes have their particular customs, but also various groups within the same tribe differ more or less from one another. This wide variety of rites renders it almost impossible to ascertain what the original customs were. On the plains, where the Karen have come into contact with the Burmese, the old customs have largely disappeared and are known only through the reports of old men. Even in the hill-country some of the ancient customs have been discontinued, so that one rarely sees a funeral nowadays at which all of the rites mentioned in this chapter are observed.[3]

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Nevertheless, it seems to have been a universal custom for the elders to take a leading part in the ceremonies by chanting a poem in which they declare that the spirit of the deceased has left this sphere for another and a better life in the spirit-world. A poem of this import is still recited in Siam and is probably not widely different from that which was familiar to the various tribes in the early days. It runs as follows:

"On the other side of the great river [4]
The apes call loudly to each other and cry.
They cry, 'tis said, because death comes so readily:
Men vanish like water rolling from the caladium leaf;[5]
They enter life suddenly and die quickly.
One by one they tread in the steps of God's sons.
They return whence they came as attendants of God;
They spread his mat and roll his cigars."

[3] At a funeral which the writer attended in the Pegu Hills in 1917 only a few of the elders, and a young man who had come from Papun, could repeat the "htee" which were used in the ceremonies. The young folks of the village itself could only be persuaded to take part after much talking, and then they appeared to be ashamed and shy. Only one night did they attempt to recite the poems, and the next morning the corpse was taken out through the side of the house and carried to the burial place where, they told me, no further rites were observed.

[4] This fabulous great river is supposed to separate this world from the next.

[5] A drop of water rolls from the axil of a caladium leaf like a drop of mercury.

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FUNERAL CUSTOMS

"The Lord of death, does his work swiftly.
The servants of Death are prompt in their task.
By the light of dawn they sharpen their spears.
In the ev'ning glow they whet them again.
They ponder where they will go to fight.
They choose whom they will overcome.
They steal through the vales and over the hills.
They vanquish the sons and daughters of men.
Into the huts of the poor, among the fowls,
Into the great houses and into the guest-rooms,
Where the oblations of brass and silver are seen
And the fowls are killed and offered, they come."

"Go, kill a black chicken.
Prepare it and offer it.
Go forth, and offer it on the main road,
At the intersection of the main roads.
If the curious person should eat it,
We would say that our grief has gone to him;
That he has carried it a great distance.
Let not evil's combings fall on us.
Let them fall 'midst the trees of the woods
Or elsewhere: the country is spacious."

Other verses are chanted, among them the following taken from what is known as a great poem ("hta mo pgha"):

"In the beginning when men first worked,
They toiled as their discernment led them.
From the beginning they worked for you;
They worked; they talked; they chanted."

A small poem ("hta hpo") supplies its lessons also:

"No more will you wear the beads,
But be draped in tendrils of the banyan.
Instead of the jacket and loin-cloth
You will wear the leaves of the banyan.
Go hence, eat the sour fruit of hades
And honey from the comb of the bees."

"Go, eat the salt fruit down in hades.
Go before and eat of the honey.
The dead, who face toward the ridge-pole,
Leave all of their children behind them.
They die and must look up the ladder,
But leave all their labor behind them.
Their death makes life not easy for us:
They send us on many an errand;
Our feet and our backs become weary."

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764 775 later is called "ta hu taw pgha a' hki." It is done both on the plains and in the hills. If the person dies in the rainy or the harvest season, the practice is to dispose of the body quickly and hold the burial rites, namely, the games and recitation of the poems or "htas" at a more convenient time.

764 774 On their way back from the burning-place the people stop at intervals, look back, wave their hands, and call out: "Pru-r-r k'la, come back, come back." They are summoning their own "k'las" to keep them from remaining behind with that of the dead person. In order to prevent the "k'la" of the deceased from following after them, they set up branches of trees in the path, which is their method of warning friends not to take a certain path. In Siam the funeral party resort to the additional precaution of opening the trunk of a big rotten tree in the jungle the next morning and summoning the "k'la" of the deceased to abide in that. Having provided an offering of rice and water for the nourishment of the spirit here, they address the tree as follows:

[539] "O Rotten Tree, you know hades and the land of the dead.
Be kind enough to show the deceased the way thither."

764 But few localities are left where the Karen still keep up their old burial-places. These localities are in the hills and on the eastern border of Burma. In these regions an elder of the bereaved family, who is familiar with the burial-place, takes the bones and valuables of the deceased, such as beads, ornaments, etc., to the spot and deposits them with the ashes of his ancestors. A man in the employ of a timber contractor told me of a chance visit made by him to one of these sacred burial-places. With a Karen driver he was in search of a working elephant that had strayed away. After crossing two or three mountain ridges and the intervening valleys, the Karen remarked that they were approaching his ancestral burial-spot and consented to lead his companion to it. They climbed to the top of the next ridge, where the ground was covered with huge boulders. Threading their way among these, they emerged into a grassy plot in the midst of which lay a boulder larger than the others, and, after clambering to the top of this rock, they found therein a deep hole in which the family relics of the elephant driver were deposited. His companion thrust the shaft of his spear nearly its whole length into the hole, the mouth of which was not more than four of five inches in diameter, and, poking about, could hear

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ing a period of six months to the exclusion of the other; they assigned a lord ("k' sa") to every mountain and river, and they invested every utensil and object about the house and the animals out-of-doors with separate ghosts ("k'las"). Some of these imaginary beings are beneficent, such as the "Mü xa" or celestial spirits that preside over births; but most of them are malevolent and have to be appeased by continual offerings, sacrifices, and tabus. To keep on good terms with these innumerable spirits consumes a large part of the time and thought of the Karen.[4]

The third conception in the religious traditions of the people is embodied in the "Y'wa" legend, which tells of the placing of the first parents in the garden by "Y'wa," the Creator; their temptation to eat of the forbidden fruit by a serpent or dragon, etc. This story so closely resembles that of the ancient Hebrews, as also certain western Asiatic traditions, that one finds it difficult not to believe that all these traditions somehow had a common origin. Were the "Y'wa" legend marked by distinctive features, we might regard it as one exhibiting only a general resemblance to other traditions extant in other parts of the world, but its parallelism with the account in Genesis precludes this view of the case.[5]

At any rate, the "Y'wa" legend has exercised a strong influence upon the Karen people. To be sure, it did not supplant the ancient animism of the tribes any more than Buddhism has displaced spirit worship among the Burmese. Nevertheless, it was accompanied by the prophesy of the return of the white brother with the Lost Book, which inspired the Karen with the hope of a better future and furnished an admirable foundation on which Christian teachers could build in promoting the development of the Karen nation which, during the last hundred years—the period not only of Christian missions but also of the British conquest and administration of Burma—has been truly remarkable.

THE "Y'WA" TRADITION

The contrast between the animistic and the "Y'wa" conception of the creation of the world is illustrated in the lines of the following "hta" or poem:

"When first the earth was made,
Who worked and built it?
When it was first formed,
Who was the creator?"

[4] See Chapter XXII on Supernatural and Mythical Beings, p. 223.
[5] See pp. 10-12.

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"When first the world was created,
The edolius and the termite toiled together.'
When the earth was first formed,
These two helped each other and made it."

The "Y'wa" conception appears in the last stanza, given below:

"When first the earth was formed,
It was God ('Y'wa') who formed it.
When first the world was fashioned,
It was God who fashioned it."

In some of the omitted parts of the poem we find the thought expressed that the edolius and the termite were co-workers with God in creating the world. It should, perhaps, be explained that [136] the termite is the white ant, which builds high mounds all over the country; while the *edolius paradiscus* is a black bird, a little smaller than a crow, with two long tail quills having tufts of feathers at the ends. Why this bird should have been given a part in the work of creation does not appear.

Characterization of "Y'wa" as the Eternal One is herewith given in two translations from an ancient poem, the first of these being by an unknown person of an earlier time and the other by Dr. Francis Mason.

"God is eternal, He alone [existed]
Before the world was made; His throne
Interminable ages stood,
And He, the everlasting God.
Two worlds may pass, and yet He lives.
Perfect in attributes divine,
Age after age His glories shine." [7]

The rendering by Dr. Mason is as follows:

"God is unchangeable, external;
He was in the beginning of the world.
God is endless and eternal;
He existed in the beginning of the world.
God is truly unchangeable and eternal;
He existed in ancient time, at the beginning of the world.
The life of God is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure his existence.
God is perfect in every meritorious attribute,
And dies not in succession on succession of worlds." [8]

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[6] Rev. T. Than Bya, D.D., *Karen Customs, Ceremonies, and Poetry*, p. 51. The Karen name for the edolius is "hto hkla." Dr. Mason speaks of it as the Mechanic nightingale: *Burma*, p. 219.

[7] This version is printed in D. M. Stevens's *The Legal Karens of Burma*.

[8] Mason, *The Karen Apostle*, op. p. 97.

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Besides being called eternal, God is described as "all powerful" and as "having the knowledge of all things." He created man and "woman from a rib of man," and he made the animals and placed them on the earth.

The power mentioned in the old poems as opposed to "Y'wa" and as having brought evil into the world is "Naw k' plaw." In later poems the name given to him is "Mü kaw li," which is a term of reproach used on account of his often being supposed to assume the female form, in order to accomplish his deceptions on the human race.[9]

He is said to have been a servant of "Y'wa" at first, but to have been cast out of his lord's presence for offering him a gross insult. The other servants of "Y'wa" have ever since cherished the desire to destroy "Mü kaw li," but have never accomplished their purpose. Hence, he continues to roam about, deceiving mankind and spreading death among them, until he shall finally be put out of the way by "Y'wa" himself. He is the direct author of evil and of the curse that has fallen upon the earth which, before his contemptible conduct, had produced rice with kernels as large as pumpkins. It was through his malicious instructions that the people learned to make sacrifices to the "Bgha" and other demons.

The Karen legends and poems give the story of the fall of man in their own picturesque language, which has been translated into English by Dr. D. C. Gilmore, who has brought together the several versions extant in various parts of the country. For the most part I shall paraphrase and condense Dr. Gilmore's translation; for the original narratives, whether in prose or verse, are full of repetitions, variations in insignificant details, and other peculiarities incident to tales that have been handed down by word of mouth.

The Lord "Y'wa," father of the human race, spoke to the first pair he had created: "My son and daughter both, your father will make an orchard for you, and in that orchard there will be seven kinds of trees bearing seven kinds of fruit. Of the seven kinds there

[9] The derivation of the names of this being are interesting. "Naw" is the usual feminine prefix of the names of all females, and "k' plaw" signifies quickly, in reference to the suddenness with which his power to tempt one was exercised. The later name, which has now come into universal use both among non-Christian and Christian Karens as the designation of the Devil, is composed of "mü," meaning woman; "kaw," signifying the state of or pertaining to, and "li," denoting the female *locus impudicus*. This combination constitutes a term of the utmost contempt and refers to the insult which Satan visited upon "Y'wa" when offerings were being brought to him. The Devil's offering was a flower on which he had misturated. His act was discovered and aroused the anger of the entire celestial company.

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is one that is not good to eat. Do not partake of it. If you eat of it, you will fall ill; you will grow old; you will die. Do not eat it. Now, whatever else I have made, I will give it all to you. Behold it and eat it. Once in seven days I will come and see you. Obey me in whatever I have commanded you. Keep my words. Do not forget me. Worship me every morning and evening."

By-and-by the Devil, in the form of a great serpent, came and engaged them in conversation, asking them what they were doing and what they had to eat. They replied that their father had provided them with more than sufficient food and escorted him to the orchard, where they pointed out the several varieties of the trees and told him the flavor of the fruit of six of the varieties. Concerning the taste of the seventh, they admitted their ignorance, inasmuch as they had been warned by their father not to eat of it. Thereupon, the Devil informed the pair that their father did not wish them well, that the fruit of the forbidden tree was the sweetest and richest of all and, moreover, would transform them into gods, enabling them to ascend to heaven, to fly, and to burrow under the ground at will. He declared that the Lord God was envious of them, while he, the Devil, loved them and was telling them the whole truth as they might easily prove by partaking of the forbidden fruit.

The man was not persuaded by the plausible words of Satan, maintained that they would comply with the orders of their father, and left the intruder. But his wife, "Naw I-u," listened to the Devil's seductive voice, was half-persuaded and sought assurance by inquiring whether she and her husband would really fly if they ate of this wonderful fruit. The Devil again insisted that he loved them dearly, and that he was trying to convince her of the truth. When she ate the fruit, the Devil laughed and told her to give some of it to her husband; otherwise, if she should die, she alone would perish, or if she should become like a goddess, she would be left without a companion. She did as directed and, after considerable persuasion, her husband also partook of the fruit, to the delight of Satan.

On the day following the eating of the forbidden fruit the Lord "Y'wa" came to see the disobedient pair and laid his curse upon them, declaring that they would grow old, sicken, and die; that their offspring would pass away at all ages, and that some of their descendants would have no more than half a family, that is,

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six children. Not only was the curse of "Y'wa" visited upon them, but also upon their first child, as was manifest by its falling sick. As "Y'wa" had forsaken them they appealed to the Devil, who replied that they must obey him to the end and promised to instruct them in the customs of his father and mother. Accordingly, he caught and killed a pig and examined its gall-bladder, explaining that if this organ were well rounded, the omen would be favorable; but if thin and flabby, there would be little hope for the recovery of the child. In case the child regained his health, they were to make a demon feast. Inasmuch as the little one did get well, they celebrated the feast according to instructions. Not long after another child was taken sick and, although they consulted the prescribed omen, there was no improvement in its condition. They, therefore, appealed again to the serpent, who told the father to catch a fowl which was to be used in calling back the spirit of the sick one. "Mü kaw li" placed the fowl, together with a bundle of chaff, a bundle of rice, and a bundle of potsherds, in a net, which he carried into the jungle, followed by the parents. There he plucked the feathers from the fowl and laid them, together with the three bundles, in the middle of the path. He then prayed: "Spirit, Spirit. The spirit has gone to hades. The spirit has gone to hell. Release the spirit." Next he cooked the fowl and tried its bones, to see whether they were soft or not. But he would not commit himself as to the favorableness or unfavorableness of the omen, telling the parents that they must watch and wait, and that meantime he would treat the case in every possible way. Nevertheless, the child died, and the Devil could give the bereaved ones no other consolation than that when the chicken bones were found in the future to be like those he had tested, they would know the omen to be unfavorable. He also taught them a charm to be used when there was sickness in the family, and, in connection with the charm, they were to wind seven threads.[10] Having wrought all this mischief and failed to furnish any certain relief from it, the Devil departed; while the man and his wife took up the task of teaching their offspring the ceremonies and charms in which he had instructed them.[11]

[10] See p. 221.

[11] The form of the tradition which is found among the Gelkho tribe is more explicit than the versions found elsewhere. The original ancestors of the human race are by them called "Al-ra-bal" or "E ra bal," and "Mo ra mu" or "Moram mun". (Among the figures they are called, respectively, "Saw Tha nal" and "Naw E u"). From the first pair they count by name thirty generations to the time of "Pan dan mun," when the people attempted to build a

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to ride when searching for the "k' las" of human beings. Any person who kills one of these animals arouses the enmity of the spirit.

The "Hti k' sa kaw k' sa," or "lords of the water and land," or "lords of the earth," are the deities who rule over the lands of the earth. They are superior to the spirits that preside over rivers and mountains and have tempers that are easily disturbed. Ill-spoken words, as well as improper and immoral actions, easily offend them; and they take vengeance on persons guilty of such misdemeanors by sending tigers, snakes, and various illnesses upon them. They are sometimes confused with the king of hades, who also passes judgment on the sins of mortals. One way to avoid angering the lords of the earth is to scrape a little rice from the top of the pot while cooking and lay it aside as an offering to them. Concerning their relation to these divinities, the people say that if they transgress in their language while in a distant land, the lords of the earth will kill them before dark; but if guilty of swearing or using indecent words in their own country, they can assuage the anger of these spirits by making an offering of rice and water at the foot of a tree and uttering the following prayer: "O Lords of the earth, we are ignorant people. Whatever transgressions we have been guilty of in using harsh or obscene words, do not, O Lords, hold them against us. We will make offerings annually. If we do not die, you shall eat of our food every year and of our children's offerings generation after generation."

Every tree, river, lake, and, indeed, almost every natural object is supposed by the Karen to be inhabited by its "k' sa" or divinity. These local spirits, however, are regarded by many as constituting lower orders of the divinities of the first group. When a man selects the location for his field, he must perform certain ceremonies to win their good will. The simplest of these is to place offerings of rice and water at the foot of some large tree in the plot chosen or to go through the ceremonies described in the chapter on Agricultural Pursuits and Other Occupations.[4] There are also the annual sacrifices to these spirits that have been described fully in the chapter on Propitiatory Sacrifices and Healing Offerings, pp. 234, ff.

The nefarious work and character of "Naw k' plaw" or "Mü kaw li" have been sufficiently revealed in the narration of the story of his temptation of the first parents of the Karen race in the

[4] See ante, pp. 76, ff.

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ably in revenge for the manner of their own taking-off. The second group is made up of those who were notoriously evil in the earthly life and suffered capital punishment for their crimes, and of those who as chiefs were known to be tyrants. This group as a whole is called "Ta mū xa."[8] Its members appear in the forms of giants and goblins or of Burman "pongyis" (Buddhist monks) and are usually seen by sick persons whose spirits ("k'las") they are seeking and on which they subsist.[9] These demons are attended by dogs in the form of woodpeckers. According to a legend two men, who were detained in the forest until night, heard a woodpecker call, and immediately thereafter they heard some ghosts say that the dog had barked. One of the men shouted, but they could distinguish nothing but some remark about monkeys, followed by the sound of a bowstring. The pair being thus discovered by the woodpecker, which was evidently with the demons, were stricken with a chill and died the next morning. Consequently, when a Karen hears the scream of this bird of ill-omen, he calls out:

"Shun me; stay far off.
Go thine own way; keep thine own road."

The third group of the ghosts of mortals consists of those who, through some accident, have been deprived of the funeral ceremonies. This group was discovered ages ago through the distressing experience of a certain patriarch, who came upon the body of a Talain who had been struck by lightning. He carried off the skull, took it home, and put it up over his fireplace. During the night the death's-head assumed human form and wandered all over the house, thereby striking terror into the members of the family. Before morning it resumed its former shape. The ghosts of people thus accidentally killed and left unburied are called "Ta t' hka" or "Ta s' hka." They inspire the Karen with horror, a fact taken advantage of by some miscreants who work evil on their enemies by means of a skull kept for the purpose. However, such working of evil falls within the realm of magic.[10]

The third general division of spirits comprises a heterogeneous lot of divinities, who exercise more or less influence on the life and prosperity of men. Some of these may have been inherited from

[8] The Karen designation of this group differs in pronunciation from that of the celestial beings (Mū xa) not only in having three syllables, but also in that its last syllable has the grave or heavy tone, while in the latter case "xa" is given the rising or light tone.

[9] For the rites in connection with these, see p. 248.

[10] See Chapter XXVI on Magic, p. 274.

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itself, when it has left the body of its own volition or on account of a sudden fright, and is liable to become lost in the jungle. In such cases the "k' la" must be lured back and induced to remain in the body it normally animates.

The "Hti k' sa kaw k' sa" are the powers that rule the earth and that most abhor the sins of lust.[1] It is to these powers that the Sgaw and Bwe tribes make a periodic sacrifice ("Ta lu hpa do" or the great sacrifice), ordinarily once in three years, but when the crops fail because of their sins, as they think, as often as once a year. The sacrifice serves the double purpose of honoring the lords of the land and water and purging the people of their carnal sins. When, therefore, the tribes enjoy a prolonged period of prosperity, they consider themselves morally acceptable to the powers and delay their sacrifice for four or even five years.[2]

A. The Great Sacrifice of the Sgaw

Among the Sgaw the great sacrifice is ordered by the most influential chief of the country, his directions being given to those chiefs who are willing to acknowledge his superiority and by them in turn to their villages. The time being appointed, a suitable spot near a good stream is chosen to which every family is expected to bring a boar and a white fowl, while the chiefs each bring a bullock or a goat. An altar of bamboo with seven posts on each side is erected, the roof of which consists of seven tiers each smaller than the one below, like that of a Buddhist palace. Posts are set round to which the sacrificial creatures are tied. On the day named for the ceremonies a jar of liquor is placed at the foot of each post, and a young man is appointed by each chief to kill his animal after a prayer has been uttered by the great chief. During the prayer the young men stand holding their "neh" (sickles) over their victims, while the chiefs place their hands on the animals. The prayer is as follows:

"O Lords of the land and water. O Lords of mercy. Lest the country should be stricken and the grain destroyed; lest the people should be distressed and a pestilence come upon them, we put our sins on these buffaloes, oxen, and goats.[3] From this day henceforth may it please you to disregard our sins. Let

[1] See page 228.

[2] Dr. Mason in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 212, ff.; Rev. T. Than Bya in *Karen Customs*, pp. 28, ff.

[3] In these ceremonies one can readily see the similarity to that of the scapegoat of ancient Israel. (Lev. 16:21-22). For a full discussion of this widespread idea, see Sir J. G. Frazer's article on "The Scape Goat," in The Golden Bough, Vol. IX.

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539 illness not come upon our people. O ye Great Spirits that rule the heaven and the earth, receive our offerings and have mercy upon us. From now on may our land be fruitful, may the work of our children prosper, may they keep well. Forget our evil deeds, which bring distress. May these things come to pass because of the offerings that we are now making."

782 The young men hamstring the animals and cut their throats as
787 soon as the chiefs remove their hands. The blood is poured around the place of sacrifice. The gall-bladders are examined to see if they are full and well-rounded. If so, the sacrifice is thought to be acceptable. Otherwise, it is evident that the sins of the people are not yet absolved and will not be, until they provide satisfactory animals. Assuming, however, that the first offering proves to be acceptable, the hair is burned off of the animals. Their heads and feet are cut off and laid upon the altar, and seven bamboo water-joints are fastened to its posts. When the flesh is cooked the great chief goes to the altar, takes some rice and meat on a silver tray, fills all of the bamboo joints and puts some of the food down at various places on the altar. He then eats a morsel himself, after which each of the others eat in turn.

783 While this ceremony is in progress, every one must confess his sins. If there is any doubt about a person, he must remove it either by the water ordeal or by that of climbing a tree. The water ordeal consists of two parts. First, the person doubted and the one doubting him take each a plantain stem and toss it into the swift current of the river. The chief notes which stem is thrown up higher by the water. Second, this part is far more serious: it consists in pushing the two men under the water and holding them there by means of forked sticks across their necks. The first one struggling up for air is accounted the loser. If he is the same one whose plantain was tossed lower than that of his opponent, he is regarded as surely guilty.

In the ordeal of tree climbing the contending men are sent in turn up a tree that has been cut around the foot until almost ready to fall. The climber must ascend to the top and throw down a garment so deftly as not to touch any one of a number of spears set up around its base. During the test the tree must not sway or creak, much less fall. The one who performs this feat with the least disturbance to the tree is the winner.

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Mount "Thaw Thi" also figures in some of the ancient folk-tales of the people. For example, one version of the story of the patriarch "Htaw Meh Pa" locates his home there. The den of the White Python is still pointed out on one side of the mount. It was to this den, according to the tale of "Ku Law Lay" and "Naw Mū E," that the fabulous serpent carried off the latter, whose husband dug holes there in trying to rescue her. These holes are also still shown.

When, in the middle of the nineteenth century, evangelists began to travel in the Toungoo district they discovered that the people living in the villages near Mount "Thaw Thi" indulged in various more or less elaborate rites on the peak. They had leaders or prophets in each village who interpreted the signs and set the time for the annual pilgrimage to the summit, where they sacrificed pigs and buffaloes, made offerings of wood and water, and built cairns of stones. A recent visitor to this spot reports that the cairns may still be seen, as also the broken pieces of the jars and bottles which once held the offerings; but that the paths are now overgrown, inasmuch as the former ceremonies have been long discontinued. Only a few old men recollect the pilgrimages to the summit made in their boyhood days. Some of these say that the people ascended the mountain to await there the appearance of the god, "Y'wa," in order that they might commune with him;[1] while others connect these rites with the Karen goddess, "Ta La," who they say dwelt there and must be propitiated at her own shrine. That "Y'wa" was venerated on the mountain is confirmed by the following poem, which Dr. Mason found in Tavoy, more than three hundred miles from "Thaw Thi" itself:

"'Y'wa' will come and bring the great 'Thaw Thi'.
We must worship, both great and small,
The great 'Thaw Thi', created by 'Y'wa'.
Let us ascend and worship.
There is a great mountain in the ford.
Can you ascend and worship 'Y'wa'?
There is a great mountain in the way.
Can you go up and commune with 'Y'wa'?
You call yourselves the sons of 'Y'wa'.
How often have you ascended to worship him?
You claim to be the children of 'Y'wa'.
How many times have you gone up to worship 'Y'wa'?"

That so conspicuous a peak as Mount "Thaw Thi" should have been regarded as the abiding-place of the great god, "Y'wa," and

[1] Rev. R. W. Blythe, of Toungoo, in *The Rangoon Diocesan Magazine*, (1917) Vol. XXI, No. 11, pp. 56, ff.

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736 boos. Quite satisfied with this demonstration of their magic
789 power, the grandmother allowed them to go on their mission. In
538 the battle that followed the seven orphans severally engaged the champions of the seven victorious villages and won back for the maiden's father the treasure that he had been forced to pay over in the previous raids. The oldest of the brothers then received the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage, having cleared himself of the curse that had rested upon him as an orphan.

Why such extraordinary powers have been attributed to the once despised orphan is not known. At first he was feared for the bad luck he might bring to the other inhabitants of the village, if allowed to remain within the stockade. That he did not perish as an outcast in the jungle must have been regarded as a sort of miracle by the village community, whose members had always lived and worked together in close interdependence. They must have looked upon him with awe and believed that he was protected by some powerful influence, not only from the evilly disposed "Bgha" but also from the dangers of the forest. It was, therefore, natural enough to regard him in course of time as a person who had "pgho." In these later days orphans appear to have been considered less extraordinary persons, as indicated by the following couplet:

[539]

"In olden times the orphans had magic.
Orphans now must talk" [like other persons].

741 The "k' thi thra" or "medicine-teachers" constitute another
753 group that should be mentioned among magic-workers. It is true
757 that they possess a rude knowledge of the efficacy of roots and herbs, but they also sometimes dispense disgusting and filthy concoctions. The Karen, like other primitive peoples, regard sickness as due to some mysterious force or "mana" and believe that all medicine, even that prescribed by European physicians, operates to dispel or vanquish this force. They expect a dose to cure immediately and discredit a medicine that must be taken repeatedly. Hence, in general, they prefer their native "medicine-teacher" and his nostrums to the educated physician and his medicine, the therapeutic effects of which are beyond their understanding. Doubtless, some Karens do distinguish between the charm and the drug, but most of them seem to cling to the idea that the drug has more or less of the charm connected with it.

784 Magic among the Karen, as among other primitive races, is divisible into white and black magic. The former is the beneficent

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and, when they got to the sea, they transformed the trough into a boat and the paddle into a mast and sail. By these means they soon reached the celestial shore. While there "Y'wa" prepared three books: one of silver and gold for the Karen, because he was the oldest; one of palm-leaf for the Burman, and one of parchment for their white brother. These were given to the white man, and he accepted them, but kept the silver and gold book himself, sending the parchment book to the Karen by the hands of the Burman. The Karen was busy clearing his fields and, paying little attention to the book, forgot to carry it home. When he burned off his clearing, it was lying on a stump and was nearly destroyed. The pigs and chickens ate the charred remains of it.[3] Thus, the wisdom contained in the book, which the ancestors of the race sorely needed after sickness and trouble came upon them, was nowhere to be found except in the pigs, chickens, and charcoal, and it was to these they turned in their distress. According to the account contained in the "Y'wa" legend, the serpent, "Mū kaw li," was directly responsible for leading them to these sources of wisdom.[4] Such is the mythical story of the origin of divination among the Karen.

If one asks Karens versed in the old poems, why the people consult these omens, they are apt to answer by quoting the following lines:

[534]

"The book of the ages was rooted by the pigs.
At first the women neglected it.
The men also did not look at it.
If both men and women had studied it,
All the world would have been happy."

"Our book of gold that "Y'wa" gave,
Our book of silver that he gave,
The elders did not obey.
Lost, it wandered to the foreigner."

Among the forms of divination the one most in vogue is that of examining the chicken bones. It is used on all occasions. Nothing is undertaken by those retaining the old superstitions, whether of little consequence or great importance to them, without divination,

[3] There are two accounts of the loss of the book, which are about equally common. Besides the version which says that the book was left on the stump, is another relating that the book was left on the floor, near the entrance to the house. Here it lay unheeded, till at last it fell through the cracks and was picked at by the fowls and chewed by the pigs under the house, being finally entirely destroyed. Then, at last, the unhappy people began to feel the need of its guidance.

[4] See Chapter XXI on Religious Conceptions, p. 313.

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on the right and a head but no foot hole on the left. The reading is "Hsaw xi wa ti htaw," and the omen is good. 787

(4) In this instance both the right and left bones show a head hole, the explanation is "Hsaw xi wa hkwa," and the omen is fair.

(5) The bones show foot holes on both sides, the explanation being "Shaw xi ku hko mi." The omen is less than fair.

(6) In this instance the left bone shows only one hole in the middle, a most unfavorable omen. The reading is "Hsaw xi htaw-deh pgha k' le." Thra Than Bya says that in case the bones have no holes at all it is a most unfavorable omen; for once in the remote past the signs read this way when a certain king was going to war, and the outcome of his campaign was an utter defeat. Hence, no one will now undertake anything, when he gets this reading of the bones.[5]

If the bones display any of the unfavorable omens, three more attempts are made in the hope of obtaining a better response. Supposing that the omen is being taken in order to ascertain the fate of a sick person and none of the four trials is successful, his relatives and friends will withhold the discouraging information, lest by telling it they should hasten the patient's death. I am unable to give translations of most of the phrases quoted above, for they seem to be in archaic language not readily understood at the present time. I am not sure that the six readings which I have mentioned exhaust the list.

Captain C. E. Poynder and Lieutenant E. W. Carrick have noted that in some of the Bwe and Padaung communities hairs or bamboo splinters are inserted in the holes of the chicken bones. According to Bwe practice, if these slant at the same angle the omen is regarded as being favorable. According to the practice among the Padaung people, if the inserted splinters slant upwards the sign is good, but if inwards it is bad.[6] Before inserting the splinters to see whether a journey may be undertaken, the diviner holds the bones up before him and addresses them, saying: [539]

> "O, you supernatural chicken bones!
> We are now planning to go and return.
> If it is right for us,
> Show us a favorable omen.
> Do not let the reply turn out bad."

In certain localities the splinters are not inserted until the

[5] Rev. T. Than Bya, M. A. *Karen Customs, Ceremonies, and Poetry*, p. 42.

[6] Capt. C. E. Poynder, *Notes on Bwe Expedition* (Government Press, Rangoon) 1894-95, p. 1; Lieutenant E. W. Carrick, *Notes on Report of Bwe & Padaung Countries*, 1894-5, p. 11.

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777 A number of tabus are associated with signs of bad luck. Many of these signs are incidental to going on journeys. For example, if one sneezes on rising to start on a journey, or on the way hears the cry of a barking deer, or sees one of these animals or a snake crossing his path, or hears of somebody's death, or sees a civet-cat near his path, he must give up his excursion until another day. Otherwise, he will meet with an accident, fall sick, or experience some misfortune in his family. It was once the custom of those who were setting out on a trading journey to repeat the following words:

●[539]

"I am going to———— to trade.
O Snakes, do not cross my path.
O Barking-deer and Rabbits, do not hinder me.
I am going across my land and along my path.
There are many other paths on the earth.
O white Civet-cat, do not hinder me."

If divination shows that one's illness is due to having taken the wrong road on a recent journey, that road rests under a tabu for a period of from four to seven days. The branch of a tree is laid across the forbidden trail where it leaves the main path, and no one will enter it until the tabu is lifted. This is called the tabu of the road ("ta dü kleh"). When a death occurs in a village, the death tabu ("ta dü ta thi ta pgha") is observed until the burial ceremonies are over. Children and persons of weak constitution are kept from witnessing the removal of a corpse from the village, inasmuch as their "k'las" are said to be easily enticed away by that of the dead person. On an elephant hunt it is forbidden to mention the name of the beast, lest its spirit should hear and take alarm, thus destroying the chance of success in the chase. Instead it is called "ta hpa do" or "the great one." Other signs of ill luck surely bring their tabus. If one does not return from work on hearing the wildcat's cry, one will die. No one should live in a house whose owner dies, or by which a green pigeon flew while the house was building.

784
241 The observance of certain tabus are regarded as conducive to the production of good crops or of prosperity in other forms. When the people have made the offering, "theh a hku," they must refrain from going into their fields for seven days. Otherwise, the demons will follow them and spoil their crops. This tabu is known as "ta dü hkü ta dü theh." During the dark and the full of the moon, in February and July, respectively, when people say that "it is hot," meaning that conditions are unfavorable, they avoid work for

[805]